

The Good Samaritan is probably one of the stories in the Bible that almost everyone has some knowledge about. Even though they may not know the full details of the story they know the Good Samaritan provided help to a stranger in need. Most have some idea of the moral of the story. However, it is a story that still needs to be told and retold in our day and time. Maybe almost more than it did in Jesus' day.

A part of knowing the story is in knowing why the story was told. An expert in the Law sought to trap Jesus. He came to Jesus with a question: "*What must I do to inherit eternal life?*" Or, "How can I earn my salvation?" Jesus, like a good Rabbi, responded with a question, "How do you read/interpret the Law?" The lawyer answered correctly. Jesus acknowledged that he had a grasp of understanding on the matter, and simply stated, "*Do this and you will live.*"

However, the Lawyer, according to Luke, wanted to justify himself before the crowd. So, there was one more question: "*Who is my neighbor?*" "Who should I love?" Other experts of the Law? Should it be those who believe as I believe? He may have been willing to tolerate the poor, the widows and orphans of Israel but... He had definite thoughts of who his neighbor was and wanted Jesus to justify his actions and his love or lack of it. He wanted his belief system confirmed and validated.

Jesus does one of the things he did best, he tells a story. The identity of the man in the story is not known. He could have been a fellow Jew, a Samaritan or even a gentile. He was robbed, beaten, stripped of his clothing and left on the road for dead. Two people pass by, those who the crowd with him would know would stop or should stop and help, a priest and a Levite. For whatever reason, neither one stop and give assistance. What if it was a trap? What if he was dead, they would have been made unclean. And, if the priest didn't stop (the first one to pass by) why should the Levite? They may have bowed their head, said a silent prayer and then hurried by.

Another one comes on the scene, a Samaritan. A hated Samaritan. The listeners know that this man will surely also pass by. Yet, at a risk to himself (anyone coming on the scene might think that he was robbing the person or was the one who had robbed him). Yet he stops and cares for the wounds (rendered first aid). Then, he took the man to a place of safety, local Inn. He paid for his room and board and promised to pay any more that the man might incur in his healing. He acted like a neighbor to the man in need. He saw a need and met it not knowing who the man was.

Jesus had simple instructions for the Lawyer, "*Go and do likewise.*"

Did you ever wonder why the others did not stop? There are some good reasons given over the centuries but there is one - one that is still around today and that is being played up big today: FEAR. They were fearful of what might happen if they stopped. As we have noted, it might have been a trick. His companions could be hiding in the bushes waiting to rob anyone who stops. Or, if he was dead there was nothing they could do and they would be made unclean for touching a dead body. They would have to go through a cleansing ritual. Or, what if the person was not a Jew, not their neighbor. They were afraid to become involved. Fear kept them from helping a person in need.

A Samaritan would have known what it was like to be passed by. The Jews would go around Samaria rather than pass through it (John 4). The woman of Samaria was surprised that Jesus would even talk with her. She had two strikes against her, she was a woman and a Samaritan. Jews and Samaritan don't mix. Why would Jesus speak to one so hated. Jesus had

even been accused of being a Samaritan and having a devil (John 8:48). The two were mixed together, because if he was a Samaritan he had to have a devil. Yet, they were probably children of Abraham (northern tribes). This was a Hatfield and McCoy situation. Neither wanted anything to do with the other. They would rather hold a grudge than find a way to come together.

It was this one, hated by the crowd who stopped and rendered help (fill the right person for the story today). The Samaritan was blind to nationality, community standing, etc. He saw someone in need, had the ability to help and he did even at his own personal cost. He provided help, grace. The only thing he saw was someone standing in need. He would help him as he could want someone to help him if he was in the same situation. Even in a dangerous part of the journey - he would stop and give help.

Two illustrations. One from the internet posted several times over Friday and Saturday.



Natasha Howell 😊 feeling hopeful.

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So this morning I went into a convenient store to get a protein bar. As I walked through the door, I noticed that there were two white police officers (one about my age the other several years older) talking to the clerk (an older white woman) behind the counter about the shootings that have gone on in the past few days. They all looked at me and fell silent. I went about my business to get what I was looking for, as I turned back up the aisle to go pay, the oldest officer was standing at the top of the aisle watching me. As I got closer he asked me, "How I was doing?" I replied, "Okay, and you?" He looked at me with a strange look and asked me, "How are you really doing?" I looked at him and said "I'm tired!" His reply was, "me too." Then he said, "I guess it's not easy being either of us right now is it." I said, "No, it's not." Then he hugged me and I cried. I had never seen that man before in my life. I have no idea why he was moved to talk to me. What I do know is that he and I shared a moment this morning, that was absolutely beautiful. No judgments, No justifications, just two people sharing a moment.
#Foundamomentofclarity

Natasha Howell, a young black woman.

The other (not sure why this kept coming to my mind) - do you know the story of Alex's Lemonade Stands? Alex was a young girl who at age one was diagnosed with a rare childhood cancer. She spent her eight years of life fighting the disease. At age four she told her parents, "When I get out of the hospital I want to have a lemonade stand." She wanted the money she raised from the stand to go to other kids who were also fighting cancer. In the first year, she and her brother raised \$2,000. She continued the stand and when she lost her battle at age 8 she had raised over one million dollars to fight childhood cancer. Her parents and brother continue her efforts today with Alex's Lemonade stands. Who would expect a young child, fighting her own battle with cancer to become a Good Samaritan?

Like all of Jesus' parables we do not know how the story ends. We do not know if the expert on the Law ever saw anyone in need as his neighbor. But, we do know that over the centuries many others have understood and have sought to live out the story. They too, know the full meaning of grace - unexpected grace and love.

Even if only a hug or a simple lemonade stand — Did you hear the Psalmist's words this morning?:

Defend the cause of the weak and fatherless;
maintain the rights of the poor and oppressed.
Rescue the weak and needy;
deliver them from the hand of the wicked.
Psalm 82:3-4

Be a neighbor. Or, in the words of Jesus, "Go and do likewise."

NIV, New International Bible Society, Zondervan, 1973, 1978, 1985
NRSV, Division of Christian Education, NCC, 1988